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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
29 August 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Assassination of US Ambassador to Guatemala

1. US Ambassador John Gordon Mein who was killed yesterday afternoon in Guatemala City was probably a victim of the Communist Rebel Armed Forces (FAR).

2. Reports indicate that the terrorists were probably attempting to kidnap him for use in a trade for FAR leader Carlos Francisco Ordonez who was arrested in Guatemala City on 24 August. The ambassador was killed while attempting to evade capture.

3. President Mendez has called for a state of siege, which is expected to be approved by the congress. The country's frontiers have been sealed and security forces have begun house-to-house searches within the capital. Guerrilla suspects and leftist extremists are being arrested.

4. The Communists have targeted US personnel because they believe that the US has been responsible for the security forces' increasing success against them. During the past several months the threats against US personnel and installations have become more strident. The latest threat came on 18 July when [redacted] the FAR was planning attempts on the lives of US personnel, perhaps including the ambassador. [redacted]

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25 (S)

5. On 6 July, [redacted] Communists were to carry out a series of bombings during President Johnson's visit to Guatemala City. A small bomb was hurled into the compound of the ambassador's residence on 8 July.

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs (C)

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6. During March, the Communist Party and the Rebel Armed Forces threatened coordinated urban sabotage and the planned assassination or abduction of US and Guatemalan officials.

7. On 16 January the Commander of the US military group, Colonel John Webber, and the chief of the naval section, Lt. Commander Ernest Munro, were killed and two other mission members were wounded in Guatemala City. The attack was in retaliation for the killing and mutilation by Guatemalan security forces of a beauty queen who was the lover of a FAR member.

8. The Guatemalan Communist Party and the pro-Cuban FAR have engaged in guerrilla and terrorist activity since the early 1960s. A government offensive begun in November 1966 drove most of the guerrillas from their traditional area of operations in northeastern Guatemala by early 1967. Since that time the guerrillas have been recruiting, training, and rebuilding their supply network before renewing large-scale guerrilla activity.